

CUPID INCOGNITO

A Christmas Tale

BY PETER MCARTHUR

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ALL these complications were due to the widow. She was cheerful and careless, and as long as people had a good time she was satisfied. She had been the life of the Magnolia House in Florida since early in autumn, and now that Christmas was at hand she arranged a celebration and a tree for the exiles.

On the forenoon of the day before Christmas among the arrivals were two attractive young people who were entire strangers to one another. When they appeared on the veranda after lunch, the widow approached the young man.

"We are going to have a Christmas tree and german tonight. Would you not like to contribute something for the favors and attend?"

"Why, certainly," answered Mr. Fairchild, for that was his real name, as he handed over a bill.

"What name shall I write?"

Mr. Fairchild looked the widow squarely in the eye and said:

"Mr. Mermaidlike Weston."

In the evening Miss Spaulding was sitting in a cozy window seat when the widow came rushing along.

"By the way," she exclaimed, "we are a couple short for our german. Will you not join us? I have just learned that your name is Miss Spaulding."

"Indeed," said Miss Spaulding, laughing as she rose, but not correcting the error. "I shall be very glad to join in the game."

A few moments later the widow introduced Mr. Weston to Miss Spaulding, and each thought it was a fine joke on the other. They entered into the spirit of the occasion with the abandon that usually characterizes Christmas merry-makings, and finally, as they moved toward one of the pleasant nooks of the veranda after a dance, the mental element of each upon the other was, "Dances divinely!"

oral company, so by mutual consent they avoided each other when in danger of meeting when others were about. Many of their evenings, however, were enlivened by pleasant strolls in the neighborhood of the hotel, and they enjoyed their romance just as if it were in a book instead of in their real lives. After a few weeks had passed Miss Spaulding was suddenly recalled to the city and left the hotel while Fairchild was out looking, so there was no leaving of any kind. Thus she passed out of Fairchild's life, but for a reason that he did not make the trouble to analyze after returning to the city. He never could make a department store or a clubhouse without strolling through, looking for a familiar face among the adolescents and pretty models. He never found it, however, and Miss Spaulding was becoming a weird memory when he suddenly found himself face to face with her at a very fashionable Christmas ball a year later.

"Why, Miss Spaulding!" he cried. "Mr. Weston!" she said, with equal surprise. In a moment they were both back, playing their parts again, and she could not help remembering how carefully she had looked at every fairweather she had seen while shopping.

"This is a pleasant surprise," he said. "What?" she replied. "Are you surprised to find me here?" And her question was answered by the guilty feeling she had been in. But before they had time to change further squaring the business card and making confessions were not of aid.

"Why, Mr. Fairchild," she began, "I never knew that you and Miss Spaulding were acquainted."

"We are not. I have never had the pleasure of meeting Miss Spaulding."

"Nor I of meeting Mr. Fairchild."

"But," said the bewildered hostess, "I thought I saw you talking to each other just now."

"I am sorry, but I am afraid you are mistaken. The couple you saw talking were entirely different people."

"Well, perhaps my eyesight is failing."

"No, it is not," he said, "but you know one another anyway, and I particularly wanted you to meet."

After she had disappeared Fairchild remarked:

"Don't you think that explanations are in order?"

"I do," replied Miss Spaulding demurely. "It is only a step to the emergency."

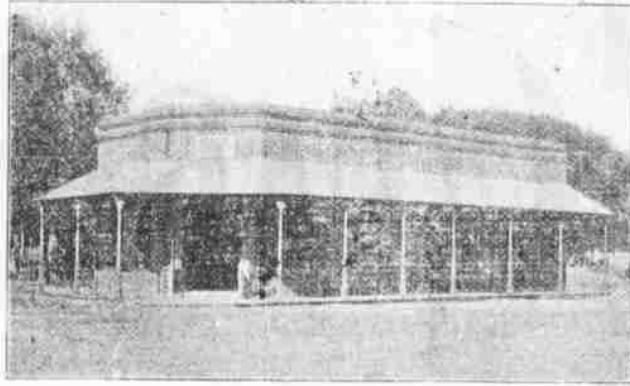
"I can't help wondering," he began, "who those two people were that our hostess thought she saw talking together in the ballroom."

"I am sure I don't know," she replied, "though for months past I have suspected him of being a floorwalker. He was always so very polite."

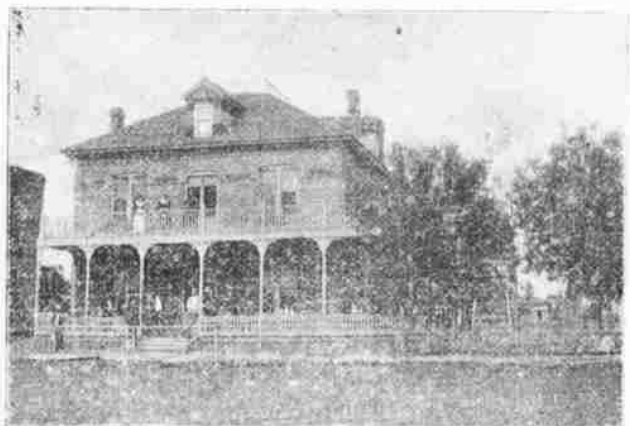
"And I was certain she was a sales girl or a clock model," he replied, "because she looked too much like a model queen to be one." They both laughed heartily at the impressions they had made upon each other and finally understood how the whole misadventure standing had occurred. Then as they found each other more interesting in their proper persons than in their assumed parts it is not surprising that before the season ended they had decided in order to avoid any further confusion that it would be a wise move when next visiting the Magnolia House to be in a position to register under the same name.

When they met during the day, they instinctively resumed their acquaintanceship on the same artificial plane. They played their parts with a natural touch of exaggeration that they both knew would seem absurd in gen-

THE BANK OF SAFFORD.



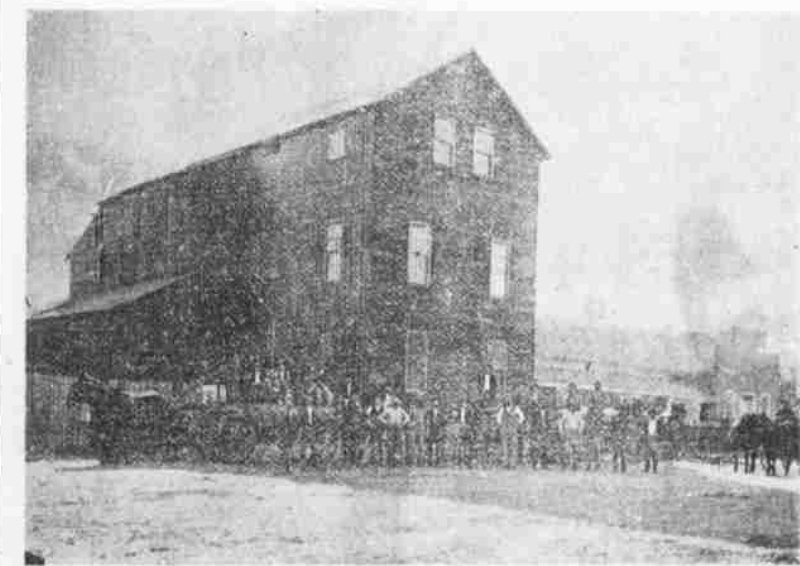
The above cut shows the building in which the Bank of Safford was born, being established by W. F. Holt, J. N. Porter and J. C. Parsley in June 1899. Mr. Holt's interest being purchased by Messrs Porter and Parsley the following year. The growth of this institution has been almost phenomenal, due entirely to the manner of conducting its business. Its officers and employees study the needs of its patrons and are always courteous and obliging. Through the rapid growth of the business of the Bank of Safford its owners find its present home entirely too small, although in the beginning the building was considered commodious, but now the problem of a new bank building confronts the officers of the bank. Before another twelve months pass by the Bank of Safford will, no doubt, be housed in a magnificent new building, built specially for its accommodation and provided with all modern banking equipment.



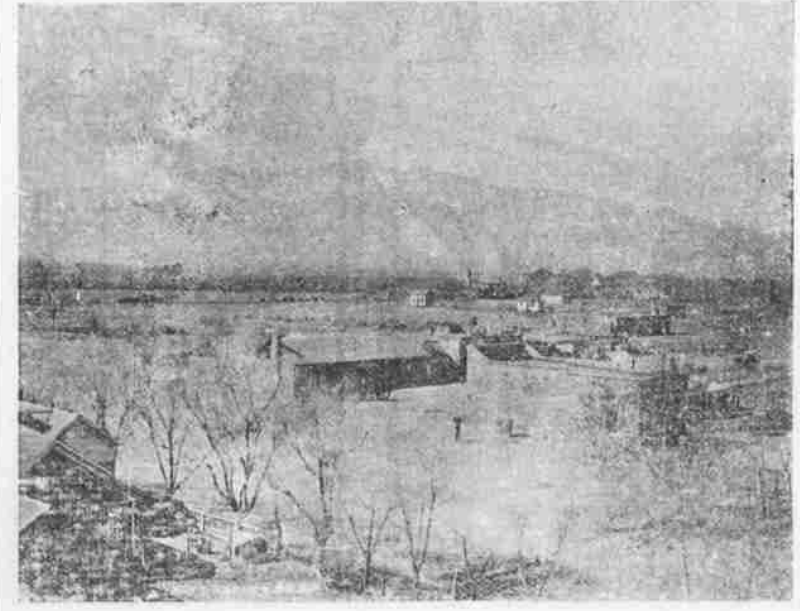
THE MARSHALL HOUSE, PIMA.



Residence of Geo. A. Olney, Safford.



Mill of Layton, Allred & Co., Thatcher.



View of Safford 5 years ago.

THE CHRISTMAS PIRATES

By CHARLOTTE F. BOLDTMANN

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WE left off sailing our chair ships to fierce and bloodless battles on carpet seas and followed Helen. The daring pirate, knocked from his ship in the excitement, forgot to cry. We all forgot everything but Helen, for she had a secret she would not tell us.

We bubbled over with excitement and desire and eagerness, begging for her story, but she was calm and mysterious and grew in importance as we pressed about her.

We hung about restlessly, watching her every move; we could not play the games so dear to us; we wanted to possess her Helen and with brute force make her tell what she knew, but we dared not, fearing never to learn. Mother was preparing to go

In the morning the little ones came whistling, begging us to go mistake but we dared not, fearful to let them see more. Yet nothing we did would quiet them and we were afraid of an outbreak of tears. Mother looked at us with suspicion, not knowing why we whispered, and we did not dare to keep it up lest she should question us and turn from the little ones what we had done. So we told them Santa Claus had taken the toys away, and if we were very, very good and never spoke of them again he would bring them back on Christmas eve. Satisfied, they began to play in the usual way. We played, too, hoping to forget, but could not. When the little ones took their afternoon nap, we started for the garret to take one peep, but were hidden to

cupboard. Again the sight filled us with longing. Again the daring pirate, aloft in his chair ship, took down one after the other, and in the delight of their possession we lost ourselves and played and played until the crowing of the cock warned us to our beds.

Next morning we slept long, and mother again feared some sickness. We could not eat breakfast; we were feverish and excited. We jumped at any unusual noise. We had no heart to play and were glad when again she went us early to bed.

Each night we played in the garret and each day longed for night to come,

yet dreading to be found out. One day when a neighbor commented on the nightly light in our garret we saw a faint and white and breathlessly waited for mother's answer. To our surprise she merely smiled and said Santa Claus needed a light sometimes. But as for us we were careful to keep the light from the window after that.

It was the week before Christmas. We began to stay up later. Our fear of mice in the garret caused our desire to see the new toys. The charms were beginning to fade, no longer we cared for the automaton that carried the doll with pink cheeks and chestnut hair, with eyes that opened and closed, with magnificent silken gown, nor for the drum major's cap, nor the horn that Little Boy Blue would blow, nor the dishes for the little mother, nor the sword and the gun for the fierce pirate, nor the rocking elephant, the bleating sheep, tarts and balls, ships and sleds, books, and the theater for our dolls.

The grownups began to get impatient and to talk often of Christmas and the joys it would bring, but we grew sadder and sadder as it approached, for it could bring no prizes for us. We missed the joy of anticipation, and for the first time in our lives we learned what sorrow meant. A realization of the wrong we had done came home to us. We would

have given anything to undo it, but could not, for nothing would make it right. Mother bustled about working to make it a happy Christmas, yet she worried over us, dosing us with medicines and teas she thought would help us. But they did us no good, for she could not know it was the guilty conscience rather than the body that needed healing. Those bitter doses filled our cup of woe almost to overflowing, yet we took them rather than tell the truth, for we had solemnly vowed she must never know. We agreed to cheer up and be happy, and when she was there we played at pirates, but had not the heart necessary to victory and generally lost to the little ones. Each day we looked more miserable and became paler and thinner and less inclined to eat. Tears came easily to our eyes, and in those times life was full of misery.

On Christmas eve we were silent and listless. We tried hard to be lively and full of expectation for the coming day, but did not deceive mother, who sent us early to bed, giving us an extra strong dose of the bitter medicine. We

tried to beg off, but she made us take it, telling us we must be well when morning came or we could not enjoy the presents Santa Claus would bring, and we had to pretend to want it. We heard her tell father she believed we would have measles or some other fever, and she helped us undress, tucking us in and kissing us tenderly the way mother always does when we do not feel well, and crept up once or twice to see us.

In the intervals we talked sorrowfully of the ordeal before us and nerved ourselves to be pleased when we saw the automobile to carry the doll with pink cheeks and chestnut hair, with eyes that opened and shut, with magnificent silken gown; the drum major's cap, the horn that Little

(Continued on page 4)

out, and during the night we should know when she came, we tried to help her to get her hat to button her shoes, while she looked at us wonderingly, not understanding our willingness to assist. When she had gone, Helen said nothing, but led the way out of the room, across the hall up the stairs and into the garret room. The daring pirate again fell but recovered himself with no tears and with a grunt followed us, quickly rather than loss sight of Helen.

Finally she stopped before a closet far over on the other side of the house. She waited for all to come up, then opened the door and peeped.

"Santa Claus!" we shouted and were silent with awe. There on the shelf under the eaves stood all the evidences that Santa Claus had been there.

Delight made us speechless, fearful of all save the joy of seeing before us toys we craved so long. There stood the automaton to carry the doll with pink cheeks and chestnut hair, with eyes that opened and closed without silken gown. The drum major's cap was there, the horn that Little Boy Blue would blow, the dishes for the little mother, a sword, and a gun for the fierce pirate, a nodding elephant, a bleating sheep, tarts and balls, ships and sleds, books, shadows and a theater for our dolls.

Still we were silent. The daring pirate brought his chair ship and climbed into it, captured the shelf's cargo. Automaton, doll, dishes, gun, balls, sheep, elephant, books, shadows and all came down. We scrambled for them, silently tearing them from each other's fingers. Each missed a treasure especially coveted and became absorbed in it, forgetting time and place and all else but that the morning to possess at last was gained.

Below stairs a dear shadowed night by the wind. We jumped to our feet in an agony of fear. No one must find us here. We snatched the toys from the little ones, hiding them away in a flood of tears. We put the toys back in their places and went to bed again. The little ones, drowsed asleep, but we tried to quiet them, impressing upon them that Santa had left the gifts for Christmas and would take them away if any one found out. We all agreed never never to tell, we promised not to peep into the closet, not even to go up to the garret from then until Christmas.

We returned to our play, wishing to set as though nothing had happened. No one spoke of our secret, but the suppressed excitement in the room made us forget our piratical habits. We feared for the little ones too.

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THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM, BY PIGLHEIN.

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OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS, BY BOUGUREAU.